

## **LeClerc Recreation Report**

Updated 10/17/2014

### **Affected Environment/Existing Condition**

The LeClerc Project Area (LPA) contains six of the Colville National Forest Plan Management Areas (*see page 4-6 of the LeClerc EA*). There are no system trails or developed recreation sites within the LPA. The main public recreation activities in the area include: hunting, dispersed camping, fishing, driving for pleasure, fuel wood gathering, OHV riding, and forest products gathering. There are two concentrated dispersed recreation areas within the LPA that receive moderate to heavy use, Hanlon Meadows and Ball Park Meadows.

Hanlon Meadows is located in T36N, R44E Section 29 and is within Management Area 8 (MA-8). This site receives moderate to heavy use by campers throughout the summer and by hunters in the fall. Stock are often present in the Hanlon Meadows holding pens and corrals. Very few conflicts between grazing and recreation users have been reported at this location. The site is accessed from a short spur road off of forest road 1935117. The 1935117 road is open to all vehicles per the Colville National Forest Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM).

Ball Park Meadows is located in T36N, R44E Section 19 and is within MA-7. This site consists of a handful of dispersed campsites used heavily throughout the summer and fall by campers and hunters. Bear storage lockers and fire rings have been installed in some of the sites. Illegal OHV use at Ball Park Meadows has been an ongoing issue for several years. Several illegal user-created OHV trails have been developed through the meadow and surrounding forest. Although fencing and signing efforts have helped in closing several of these routes over the past few years, illegal use is still a common occurrence in the open meadow on the north side of forest road 1935115. Forest road 1935115 is open to all vehicles per the MVUM. This past summer, a fence was installed in Ball Park Meadows to keep vehicles out of the West Branch of LeClerc Creek riparian area.

### **Effects of Alternative A – No Change**

Under this alternative, effects to recreation would remain unchanged from existing conditions.

### **Effects of Alternative B – No Action**

Under this alternative, grazing would be eliminated from the LPA. Little or no significant effect would result under this alternative. Vegetation in the meadow may change if grazing is eliminated which could effect the quality of the dispersed campsite (i.e. potentially less open areas from the encroachment of brush). However, this effect would likely be offset by wildlife grazing or continued traffic in the site by recreation users. Since complaints about the presence of stock have been insignificant in the past at this site, eliminating stock would not likely improve the camping experience or increase the amount of recreation use in the meadow.

### **Effects of Alternative C - Proposed Action with Adaptive Management**

The proposed action would have little to no effect on recreation use with the LPA. The current access to Hanlon Meadows (Forest Road 1935117) would be closed and access would be provided via a newly constructed spur (using an old roadbed) off forest road 1935116. The existing gate on the entrance to the 1935116 road would be moved to provide public access on the new spur road to Hanlon Meadows. The newly constructed road would be open to the same vehicle types as forest road 1935. The change in travel distance would be negligible. The MVUM

would need to be updated to reflect the route changes. Grazing within the site would remain unchanged from current conditions.

Although the grazing allotment would be expanded to include the Ball Park Meadows area, the camping area and meadow itself would be fenced off to prevent stock from entering areas used by campers. Therefore, little to no effect is expected on recreation use at this site.

Proposed improvements to grazing allotments and patterns could help reduce resource damage and would likely improve watersheds and game habitat for anglers and hunters.

#### **Effects of Alternative D – Modification to Alternative C**

Effects to recreation would be the same as Alternative C. The changes in fence locations would not effect recreation use in this area. The change to grazing use at Hanlon Meadows should not have an effect on recreation use since it is not a change from the existing condition.

#### **Mitigation Recommendations:**

The proposed fencing at Ball Park Meadows would meet mitigation requirements to reduce disturbance to campers at Ball Park Meadows. Road signing would be needed to redirect traffic to the new access route for Hanlon Meadows. Newly constructed fence should be monitored at least once a year to prevent stock from entering Ball Park Meadows. Additionally, the MVUM will need to be updated to reflect the route changes.

#### **Summary**

The overall recreation experience would remain relatively unchanged in the LPA under all three alternatives. Since no roads would be constructed in locations identified as MA-11 (semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation) the proposed action would meet the recreation goals and objectives identified in the Forest Plan for the LPA.

Prepared by:

/s/ Kevin Walton

Recreation Staff Officer, Newport and Sullivan Lake Ranger District